

## COMMEMORATING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

MR. LUGAR. Mr. President, on this day 70 years ago, just before eight in the morning local time, the first wave of 183 Japanese imperial aircraft descended upon the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor. A second wave of 170 aircraft followed to make sure that as much damage was done as possible. Within two hours, this unwarranted act of aggression left four U.S. Navy battle ships, three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti aircraft training ship, one minelayer and 188 U.S. aircraft destroyed. The attack left devastation and havoc in its wake, taking the lives of 2,402 Americans and wounding 1,282. The Imperial Japanese Navy conducted this attack in order to limit United States military intervention capabilities in respect to Japanese imperial ambitions in the Pacific arena.

On that day that President Roosevelt so aptly said would “live in infamy,” the Japanese Empire left something behind amongst the smoldering ruins of our Navy. They left behind a unified people in which they “awakened the beast”. Out of the ashes of Pearl Harbor was reborn an even stronger American Navy, economy, and people.

For the younger generations of today, Pearl Harbor was a remote event in an era long gone. But to people like Army Pfc. Merle Berdine, of Valparaiso, Indiana, who was sitting in the warm Hawaiian sunshine in front of his barracks at Fort Kamehameha that fateful Sunday morning, this act of aggression was an attack on the present. Pearl Harbor wasn’t just part of his collective history that he shared with his nation, it became part of his personal history, shaping and defining him. At 7:54 AM Merle was a soldier going through his daily routine and finishing up his one year rotation at Pearl Harbor. At 7:55 AM he was a man under attack in a nation at war, digging a trench to withstand the bombardment and wondering whether or not he was going to see his family again. By 11 AM, he was dealing with a new reality, one in which he was saying goodbye to more than two thousand of his brothers. Within 24 hours, he was a soldier for a nation at war with Japan, within 48, that war had grown.

We as a nation oftentimes take the sacrifice Merle and his fellow service members have made for granted. They sacrificed their time, their personal health, and far too often their lives to let us as a nation live free and prosper. Without their sacrifices we would be living in a very different world today and no amount of gratitude can ever be enough. But we must try, and we must most importantly, remember.

I am proud to say that, at last count, 60 of these heroes who experienced the horror of Pearl Harbor call Indiana home. But, as with all World War II Veterans, this proud generation is shrinking. Just last year six Pearl Harbor veterans passed away in our state. According to the Pearl Harbor Survivors, only twenty-five of them are able to be active members of their community. The rapid decline and increasing immobility of this generation poses many dangers to the memory of Pearl Harbor.

Today, we remember their sacrifice, we discuss the events of the day, the lessons of history are reviewed, we collectively remember and, if you know a veteran of Pearl Harbor, we

should slow down and listen before the opportunity passes.

Since 2002, I have been leading the effort in Indiana to record oral history interviews with Pearl Harbor survivors and all veterans as part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. In addition to the stories of 104 Hoosier Pearl Harbor survivors already archived at the Library of Congress, I have submitted the histories of over 10,000 veterans for permanent inclusion in our national history. As a veteran of the U.S. Navy, I know the memories and life changing experiences gained from serving our country, and I am pleased to help ensure that Hoosier veterans are able to record their personal stories so that we can all learn about and appreciate their tremendous sacrifice.

One of the most important lessons of Pearl Harbor was that the adversaries of the United States are multiple and active. We learned that we must always be prepared. On September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 we were painfully reminded of these lessons.

As we recognize these historical events, I call attention to the 97,800 military personnel who today are on the ground in Afghanistan, with a total of 129,200 deployed to the region aboard ships at sea, on bases, and at air stations in the region supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Mr. President, we are down now to only about 12,500 military personnel deployed to Iraq, yet some 79,105 are still deployed to the region aboard ships at sea, on bases, and air stations in support of the redeployment of that force. Since 2003, 4,474 have been killed in Iraq operations, and 1,733 have been killed in Afghanistan since 2001.

These men and women continue to answer the call to serve a cause greater than themselves as those men did that fateful day in Pearl Harbor seventy years ago. I ask my colleagues here today to join me in humbly honoring Pfc. Berdine, and all those who have and continue to serve our Nation in uniform, for their inspirational service.